

stockings, and her dress did not come down to within seven or eight inches of her feet. She wore no shawl, which is common in the district, about her neck. She held her head as erect as a startled fawn. Her hands were clasped in an attitude of wild supplication, and the symmetry of her form was enhanced by the unusual addition of a leather strap buckled around her waist, which, though neither new nor ornamental in itself, had the effect of showing off her naturally beautiful figure to the best advantage.

The moment she appeared from behind the holly-bush, she commenced her oration. And, talking with a volubility and amount of action which it would be impossible to describe, her features became animated, and the blood mounted to her cheeks. In truth, I have rarely seen so beautiful and so natural a girl. I think she knew she was a beauty, and had "chanced" a little of the success of her visit upon that score, as well as upon my "goodness;" but there was no vanity or coquetry in her manner—she was perfectly natural and simple, and, as regards the knowledge of her beauty, so intelligent a girl as she was could not possibly look at her reflection in one of her own dark mountain lakes, and not see that she was different from her neighbors.

She had watched my countenance with the quickness of an Irish peasant, during the whole time she was speaking; and in fact I felt sure she had prolonged her statement for that sole purpose, in order to form an estimate of her success, or vary her line of advance according as circumstances revealed themselves. I saw this perfectly at the time; but my interest in her vivacious courage was so great, and my admiration of her beauty so impossible to conceal, that she saw in a moment, though I had not yet spoken a word, that she had won her point.

"Ah! well I knew your honor had a good and kind heart within you," said she, coming forward with graceful animation and under cover of her well-turned flattery. "And now, maybe I'd never have another opportunity, and oh! just listen to me till I tell you what I have to say, for mine is a sore, sore sorrow."

In a moment her whole countenance—almost her form, had changed. Her courage—some of which she had evidently derived from her beauty—seemed to have departed. Tears filled her eyes as she looked down upon the ground, and even her form seemed to lose many inches of its height. I could scarcely have thought that the same human being was before me, as she now stood about to tell her tale of sorrow.

"What is your name?" I asked, "and where do you live?"

"Mary Shea is my name," said she, "that is, my maiden name, and indeed for that matter I am not married yet."

"Married!" I exclaimed, "why you seem scarcely seventeen years of age."

"True for you," replied she, "you guessed it very nigh, as I'll only be seventeen next Shrove-tide."

"And what is your case? what do you want me to do?"

"I'll tell your honor that," replied she, resuming in a moment a portion of her previous animation. "What I want your honor to do is, to put down Eugene's name in the books, as tenant for the little place I have up in the mountain."

"And who is Eugene? and how came you to have a little place of your own, and you so young as you are?"

"I'll tell your honor all about it," she replied: "the way of it all was this:" and again in a moment her countenance changed, her eyelids drooped, her form seemed to lose its height, and, with a little hesitation as to where she should begin, she commenced her tale of woe. "The way of it all was this; your honor was not here in the 'hungry year' (a term frequently used amongst the peasantry to describe the famine); but them was terrible times. I was only a little slip of a girl then—and sure for that matter I'm not much more this minute. But my father had a little place up in the mountains, the same as what I was now talking about. Well, you see, he was an ould man, and my mother was sickly, and they had no other child but me, and the place was very small, and, when the potatoes blackened, sure they had no one but God to look to. 'Father,' says I, 'I fear ye'll die, and mother too, if ye don't get something to ate.' 'True for ye, child,' says father, 'but where are we to get it? the great God has rotted the potatoes in the ground, and what other support had we all, and sure the neighbors are as bad off as we are.' Mother said nothing: she looked at father and me, she kissed me once or twice, as if to wish me good-by; and when I got up in the morning, I found her sitting in her clothes beside

MARY SHEA.

"THE desolate orphan," who now came forward and exhibited not merely her bright eyes but her full form to my view, was somewhat singular in her appearance. She had but little of the original Celt in her features. Her beauty was purely Spanish, of which I have seen many perfect specimens in Tuosist and around Kenmare: large soft eyes, with beautiful dark downy eyelashes, the mouth well formed, and cheek of classic mould; while the figure, perfect in its symmetry, is erect and active, and exhibits a lightness of step and grace of motion which can rarely be attained but by constant practice in walking over the mountains. The form which now stood before me was a beautiful specimen of this perfect Spanish type. She was clean and neat in her person, though her clothes were of the coarsest kind. Her gown, made of the light gray flannel or frieze manufactured in the mountains where she lived, was crossed upon her bosom and extended up to her neck. Her hair, as black as jet, was neatly parted on her forehead, and hung in careless folds down her back. She had neither shoes nor

the fire quite dead and stiff—not a month after the potatoes had blackened.

"Well, ye see we lived far up in the mountains, and no meal or any thing could be got there, except what I brought myself—and it was ten long miles from Kenmare. 'But still,' says I, 'I won't let father die, if I can help it!' So we had a few hives of honey which the gentlemen liked, because the bees made it all on the heather; and I used to slip over to Kenmare, now and then, with a hive, and bring back a little meal to father—we had no cow, as the place was too small to rear one. And I won't tell your honor a lie when I say that sorra ha'porth we had to live on except just the few hives of honey; and I knew when they were out, and I had no money to buy meal, we might just lie down and die. However, I said nothing to father about this, for I was only a slip of a girl; but I thought it for all that.

"Well, sure enough, after a time the honey was all sold, and I smothered the last bee I had—though in troth I was sorry to do so, as I had reared them all myself, and I think they knew me, as they never once stung me, though I used to sit close to the hive watching them. However, I knew well it was better for them to die than father, so I had to smother them; and I went down to Kenmare with a sorrowful heart, and got 15s. for the hive. Well, with that I fed father and myself for another weary month: and, when the meal was out, father says to me—'Mary dear, it's no use striving any longer against the hunger. I can't stand it. I'm weak and faint, and not able to go out to the public works, and I might as well die in the house as on the roads; and now mind, Mary dear, when I die, bury me beside your mother in the garden, and don't be making any noise about it—calling a wake or a funeral, for all has enough to do these hard times for themselves.' 'Oh father dear, don't talk that way,' says I, 'I'll just go out and see if I can't get something that will keep the life in ye yet.' So father said nothing, but just lay down on the bed, as if to wait till I came home. Well, I had some strength and spirit in me yet. And, as Eugene and I had known each other since we were little children, I thought I would just go to him and see if he could help me. But when I went to his house he was far away on the public works. So I had no more heart nor strength to go any farther, and I had enough to do to get home. But oh! sorrow came heavy on me then: for, when I called on father as I came in to ask him if God had sent him any food, he did not answer; and when I came to his bed, and put my hand upon his forehead, I found that he was dead and cold, and I was left alone in the world."

Here the poor girl's voice failed; and, commencing to weep bitterly, she turned her head away. I found the tears rising in my own eyes too, but, endeavoring to turn her thoughts from this sad scene, I said—

"You have mentioned Eugene once or twice—who is Eugene?"

She dried her eyes in a moment; and, resuming the natural vivacity of her manner, she called aloud to some one who was evidently near at hand—

"Eugene! where are you, Eugene? I wouldn't wonder if he was here this minute!"

And, truly enough, he was; for, slowly emerging from the same holly-bush where I had observed the young damsel's eyes in the first instance, came a tall, good-looking youth, clean and fair, with a cheek as smooth and free from beard as a woman's. He was about nineteen or twenty years of age, and as bashful as a youth detected under such circumstances—though she had evidently hid him there herself—could be.

"Don't be afeared, Eugene," cried the damsel—"don't be afeared. The gentleman isn't angry. Come and spake to him this minute.—He is shy, your honor," said she—turning to me in a conciliatory voice, as if excusing and patronizing her lover, over whom she evidently considered she had a great advantage in facility of speech and general knowledge of the world—"he is shy, and doesn't know how to spake to a gentleman; and I hope you'll excuse him; but he is a good kind boy for all that, and well able to become a tenant for the little place, if you will only put his name in the book."

"Well but," I urged, "if I put his name down in the book, he will be the tenant and not you; and how would that answer your purpose?"

"Oh, sure your honor, it would be all the same; we would get married at once, and we would have the little place between us, as I feel lonesome in it all by myself."

"How large is the little place?" inquired I.

"Well, for that matter, it is big enough," she replied; "but indeed it is not good for much, as it's able to feed nothing but the bees. And troth, I don't know where they find any thing to gather except in autumn, when the blossom comes upon the heather."

"What is the value of the place?" asked I.

"Well, indeed, it is not much. The late agent said it was good value, little cabin and all, for 7s. 6d. a year, and the rent was never raised since, and we made a few perches of potato-garden near the house."

"And so you and Eugene really want to marry and set up house upon a place only worth 7s. 6d. a year, cabin, mountain-land, garden, and all?"

"Well, indeed, your honor, I don't see what better we could do. You see Eugene and I have known each other a long time now, and all the neighbors knows we loves each other very much—and why wouldn't I love him, poor boy, when it was himself that saved my life?"

"How did he save your life?" I asked.

"Well, you see, I was telling you all about it," she resumed, "when you asked for Eugene, and I had to present him to your honor. But, shure enough, it was Eugene, and no one else, that saved my life, that night I was telling you of when father died. I found him cold and stiff in the bed when I came home; and I had nothing in the house myself—no meal, nor bread, nor potatoes, nor a ha'porth; so I just sat down on the bedside near him, and—God forgive me!—I prayed that He would take me too; for I was helpless and sorrowful, and weak and down-hearted, with the hunger. And then I began to cry; and I thought of mother, how she had died, and how father was dead, and no one to bury him. 'And,' thinks I, 'if I die too, the cabin will make a decent little grave over us all, and no one will know any thing about it!' So I was crying on, thinking of all these things, and wondering how it all came about, when I heard a footstep at the door, and I guessed at once it was Eugene's. So he never said a word to me at first, but he sat himself down beside me. And, after a little, he says, 'What is it, Mary dear?' 'Oh, Eugene,' says I, 'mother is dead, and now father is dead: there he is before you, and I'm going to die too, for I'm broken-hearted, and have nothing to eat.' 'Eat this,' says Eugene, and he pulled an elegant loaf out of his pocket—'I guessed ye came up to look for me to-day; and, when I came home from the works, and mother gave me my supper, I just put it in my pocket, as I wasn't hungry myself, and came off with it to you. So eat it, Mary dear; for I couldn't eat it if a basketful of bread was before me!' Well, I knew the poor boy had stinted himself to give it to me; but I was well-nigh gone, so I just gave him a loving look, and says I, 'Eugene dear, I know well how it is; but I'll eat it for all that for your sake, and for fear I'd die before your face.' And so I did. 'And now, Mary,' says he, 'come home with me, and mother will take care of you for a bit; and, in the morning, I'll come out myself and bury father for you.' And so he did—the brave boy that he is, shy as he looks before your honor now. And we dug the grave between us, and put father into it, just as he was—for we had no coffin—where would we get one that year? and we laid him beside mother. And when the great day comes, sure they'll both rise together as well as if they were in a coffin of gold!"

Again she began to weep; but it was of short continuance this time.

"And now won't you put Eugene's name in the book? and we'll go live there again, for it's hard to keep him away, and he is always pressing me to go with him to the priest. And we have put a new coat of thatch upon the little cabin, and maybe God would be good to us, and the bees would thrive, and the hungry year may never come on us again."

It was hard to resist such an appeal; especially when so easy an act would make a young and attached couple happy. But when I reflected upon the prospects in life upon which they were about to marry—nothing but a few acres of worthless heather, the cabin and all the land attached worth only 7s. 6d. a year, and fit for nothing but to feed bees—I felt that, in granting her request, I was only perpetuating the very system which had killed her father and mother; and, if extended now again, could not possibly lead to any thing but the utmost want and misery. To think of this noble youth and innocent and lovely maiden—such a handsome, loving couple as they were—squatting on this miserable plot of irreclaimable mountain-side! I could not bear to think of it, so I resolved, if I could, to save them from so unworthy a fate.

"Well, Mary, I have heard all you have to say, and I would gladly do any thing in my power to serve you and Eugene,* but I cannot bear the thought of a handsome girl like you, and a fine manly boy like him, settling down for life on this miserable patch on the side of a barren mountain. I am thinking it would be far better to try your fortune in America together, and go out like the other emigrants, so many of whom were pressing to get their names down to-day."

Mary was silent for a little. At last she said—

"Well, your honor, I often thought it would be better, sure enough, to try our fortune in America, than to marry and settle on that small patch of barren land where my little place is; but I couldn't bear to think of going out on charity as a pauper. I never yet got poor-relief from the workhouse; and I wouldn't wish to go to America with the likes of the emigrants your honor is now sending out."

"I understand your scruples," I replied, "so I will propose another plan. What do you think if Eugene were to go out first—just for one year—and see whether the country would suit you and him? Let him return at the end of the year; and if he does not like America, then I will put his name in the books as tenant for your own little place, or probably I shall be able to give you and him a better farm by that time."

"I would be loth to part with him for a whole long year," said Mary, looking lovingly upon the bashful Eugene; "but still I think it might be the best way after all; for, no doubt, it is a poor place to settle on. But Eugene has no money to go out with, and I have little or none to help him, and he couldn't go without that."

"He shall not fail for want of funds; I will lend him the money for his voyage. If he return rich, he will repay me; if not, why it can't be helped."

"Your honor is very good," replied she, looking mournfully at Eugene; "but what will I do without him; and where will I go while he is away?"

"You can stay at mother's, dear, while I am away," broke in Eugene, who seemed suddenly to awake to an energy he had not before exhibited. "You well know she always loved you as a daughter, and she will care for you for my sake as well as for your own."

"I believe your honor's right," said Mary, turning to me; "let him go and try his fortune for one year; but mind," she added, as she looked toward the lad—"mind, Eugene, you must swear to me on the Book you will come back—rich or poor, I don't care which—within the one year."

"I will swear it to you freely," replied Eugene, who seemed suddenly to find his tongue and all his other energies at the prospect of such an opening.

"And will your honor promise, on the word of a gentleman, to give us back the little place, or get us another better one when he returns, if he won't take me out with him again?" asked Mary, with an appealing look.

"Indeed I will; I faithfully promise it, if I am alive and here."

"Well, then, let it be so," said the weeping Mary; "and now the sooner the better. When will your honor give him the money that he may go at once?"

"To-morrow morning. He shall also have a new suit of clothes, as fast as the tailor can make them, and I have no doubt he will get into immediate employment."

Mary looked at her intended husband, and at once perceived that a man's energy and courage had suddenly risen within him. He was no longer a sheepish boy, patronized and brought forward by her; and he took upon himself the unaccustomed task of comforting and patronizing her.

"Mary dear, don't fret; as sure as the sun is in the heaven, I'll come back; I know I will, and this will be the last parting we will ever have. The gentleman has advised us for our good. The barren lot on the mountain-side is no place for the likes of you and me to settle. I'll go seek my fortune in America; and, please God, I'll surely succeed; and then I'll come back for my own darlin', and take her out along with me. For God's sake, master, let us be quick; for I dar'n't rest, or think of leaving Mary, or maybe I couldn't go out at all."

Mary threw her arms about Eugene's neck, and—utterly regardless of my presence—sobbed and wept like a little child. Her patronizing

air was utterly gone, and she addressed him as a lover who had proved himself worthy of her affections.

"Eugene," she said, "I know well I need not fear for your love if you were ten thousand miles away. Ye have proved it too often for me to doubt it for a moment now. Go, and God be with you; but—mind you come back within the year, *whether ye be rich or whether ye be poor*—if rich, ye will be welcome, and if poor, ye will then be doubly welcome to your own darlin' Mary. *Never forget that.*"

She then turned to me, and, holding out her hand as a countess might have done, she continued:

"Thank your honor much for your kindness; I'll never forget it, either in this world or the next."

In a few days Eugene appeared before me, clad in a new and comfortable suit.

I gave him his passage-money, and a couple of pounds over, that he might be able to go up the country, and look for employment at once. He thanked me in a manly, open way, and departed.

My time and attention were so much occupied with the onerous duties in which I was then engaged, that though I often thought of Mary and her lover, yet I never had an opportunity of making special inquiries about her; but, one day, she sought me again as I was walking in the same grounds; and, coming up to me with a countenance beaming with pleasure, she showed me a letter from Eugene. It was not long, nor what most people would call very interesting; but he told her he was in full employment with a good and kind man; that he had already saved seven pounds out of his earnings, and he hoped, before very long, to come back and claim his prize, and carry his darling Mary off to a far home he was even then preparing for her. This was about six or seven months after he left, and she had remained sometimes in her "own little place," as she called it, and sometimes with his mother, ever since.

About five months after the last interview, I was walking alone along the sea-shore at Kenmare, when I was again waylaid by the handsome Spanish beauty; but this time she was accompanied by a young man. She looked grave, though happy, as she walked lovingly by his side, and her patronizing ways had altogether departed from her. I looked carefully at the young man. He was tall and strong: his beard was massive, and reached almost to his chest; his face was handsome, but sunburnt and weather-beaten; and his whole appearance was as little like her lover Eugene as it was possible for it to be.

I stood still as the pair approached me, looking intently from one to the other. Mary and the man came quite close up to me, and—as neither of them addressed me—I was the first to speak.

"How is this, Mary?" said I, "and who is this man who accompanies you? You surely do not mean to say you have cast off Eugene, and taken up with another man?"

Mary leaped nearly a foot from the ground as I said so. "I knew your honor wouldn't know him!" cried she in a sudden ecstasy of joy. "Why this is Eugene himself! Sure didn't he deceive *me* when he first came into the cabin, and why would your honor know him? Look at him now, and tell me if he is not grown a real man in earnest. Turn round, Eugene, and show yourself;" and, assuming her old patronizing way for a moment, she turned him round and round for me to look at and admire, while he submitted with a loving, tender look of admiration at his bride.

"And so this is indeed Eugene come back," I exclaimed, "and such a fine, manly-looking fellow too. I hope you have prospered, Eugene, and that you will now take out Mary to a new and happy home far better and richer than her little place on the barren mountain."

Eugene was about to reply, when Mary leaped up, and caught him round the neck with her arms.

"Oh, Eugene!" cried she—almost in hysterics between joy and anxiety—"take me away with you soon, oh take me away, we cannot go too soon to please me!" Then—turning rapidly to me—she said, in a joyous and altered voice—

"He has got a fine place of his own now, and twenty acres of good land, and a grand wooden house, in which he says I can live as comfortable as any lady. Oh, Eugene darling," cried she, turning to him again, "take me away—take me away, and let us go to our new home, and never know sorrow or hunger more!"

She burst into tears, and, clinging to his neck, kissed him over and over again, till he gently took her in his arms, and placed her sitting—still scabbing like a child—on a bank of grass close by.

* "Eugene" is a common Christian name amongst the peasantry in that part of the country, probably of Spanish origin.

“Sir,” said he, “I have to thank you for your kindness. I have brought back with me the money you lent me, and am now ready to repay you. I have a neat place to bring Mary to, and all reasonable comforts for her. I could have made it better, had I waited another year; but I promised in your presence not to let more than one year pass without returning, whether I came rich or poor. I have come back according to my promise. If not rich, at least with enough to give her plenty to eat, and a warm, comfortable home; and I hope soon to make it better. To-morrow we go to Cork: we are to be married there. The next day we sail for the West. May God bless you, sir; I will never forget your kindness.” And he placed his passage-money in my hand.

Mary sat listening while he spoke, sobbing and crying all the while. He lifted her gently up. She seized my hand and kissed it, covering it with her tears. Then suddenly smiling, while the large drops trembled in her eyes, she gave me one grateful and happy look, and left the sea-shore with her lover.
